

## SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

SPIKE-HEELED LARK *CHERSOMANES ALBOFASCIATA* AT AMBOSELI: A NEW BIRD FOR KENYA

At 10:00 hrs on 21 October 1979, P. Lewis and I located an unfamiliar lark about 1 km from the New Amboseli Lodge (2°39'S., 37°05'E.), which was subsequently identified as a Spike-heeled Lark. The bird was somewhat shy, usually allowing approach by car to 7 or 8 m before running or flying away. The following details were noted after at least 5 min of close observation with x10 and x8 binoculars:

Slightly smaller in size than Red-capped Larks *Calandrella cinerea*, which were observed in some numbers in the same area. Tail noticeably very short, bill long and thin. Head and mantle dark grey-brown, with buff-white edgings to mantle feathers. Nape paler, crown with dark heavy streaking, slight whitish supercilium. Wings broad, flight feathers uniform grey-brown lacking any rufous or chestnut colouration. Tail feathers as flight feathers in colouration but with conspicuous whitish tips. Lower rump and upper tail coverts orange-chestnut, contrasting noticeably with mantle and tail, especially in flight. Throat pale; underparts marked with rich orange-buff, breast colour more pronounced with small dark spots or streaks. Eye dark, legs pale pinkish brown.

The behaviour of the bird differed from that of the more confiding Red-capped Larks. It usually ran rapidly away from observers, attempting to find cover amongst the more extensive clumps of short grass. The long thin bill and short tail gave the bird a rather cisticola-like appearance when moving amongst cover.

This appears to be the first record of the Spike-heeled Lark for Kenya and is presumably referable to the race *beesleyi* described from the Asogati Plain in northern Tanzania some 50 km to the south (see Benson 1966, Benson & Forbes-Watson 1966, Beesley 1971).

I thank G.R. Cunningham-van Someren for providing information and literature concerning this species.

## REFERENCES

BEESLEY, J.S.S. 1971. Further notes on the Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* in East Africa. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 91:10-11.

BENSON, C.W. 1966. The Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* in East Africa. *ibidem* 86: 76-77.

————— & FORBES-WATSON, A.D. 1966. A further note on the Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* in East Africa. *ibidem* 86: 172-173.

R.D. Moore, Box 24819, Nairobi.

Received 31 October 1979

THE FIRST RECORD OF THE BASRA REED WARBLER IN THE SUDAN A Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* was netted and ringed at Juba (4°52'N., 31°30'E.) along the Nile in low reeds above water on 30 August 1979. The bird had still unmoulted primaries and its measurements were: wing 78 mm, bill to feathers 20 mm and weight 16 g. I recognized it at once by its long slender bill and its grey olivaceous colour, creamy-white below with an unstreaked throat. I know the species from Ethiopia where I have caught it at Lake Koka in the rift valley at the end of August and in early September.

The main known wintering areas for the Basra Reed Warbler are along the coast of East Africa from Kenya to Tanzania and Mozambique (Pearson, Britton & Britton 1978, Ash 1978) and in southern Malawi (Hanmer 1979). The birds seem to arrive in East Africa from late October to January (Pearson & Backhurst 1976). The Juba bird was very early and very far west. Only the records from Ethiopia are as early where they appear to stopover for primary moult before they go on in November to their final wintering areas in eastern Africa.

There are two other very far western records of this species, from Uganda in November (Pearson 1972) which might have come from the Sudan along the Nile. Pearson's birds both had fresh plumage.

The Juba bird is a further record which supports the theory that the Basra Reed Warbler arrives in Africa at the end of August, where most birds moult their primaries, before going on to winter south of the equator (see Pearson & Backhurst 1976, Ash 1978). It also supports the idea that they avoid large highland areas during migration, passing along the Ethiopian rift valley and through Somalia (J.S. Ash, pers. comm.). Some birds are evidently channelled west by the Ethiopian highlands to migrate along the Nile to Lake Victoria in Uganda and, presumably, further south.

#### REFERENCES

- ASH, J.S. 1978. A Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus griseldis* in Mozambique. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 98: 29-30.
- HANMER, D.B. 1979. A trapping study of Palaearctic passerines at Nchalo, southern Malawi. *Scopus* 3: 81-92.
- PEARSON, D.J. 1972. Some migrant bird records from the Kampala area, Uganda. *EANHS Bulletin* 1972: 27-29.
- & BACKHURST, G.C. 1976. The southward migration of Palaearctic birds over Ngulia, Kenya. *Ibis* 118: 78-105.
- , BRITTON, H.A. & BRITTON, P.L. 1978. Substantial wintering populations of the Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* in eastern Kenya. *Scopus* 2: 33-35.
- G. Nikolaus, [Juba], Box 47051, Nairobi. Received 4 October 1979

#### CORRIGENDA

*Scopus* 3: 71 Under *Prodotiscus insignis*, 'the Montane White-eye *Zosterops poliogastra*' should read 'the Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*'. Ed.

#### THE EAST AFRICAN BIRD REPORT 1979

This report, which forms the fifth issue of *Scopus* volume 3, will be published in 1980. Readers are asked to note the following two points:

1. A list of species for which records are particularly required for the Report is enclosed with this issue. It will help the compilers of the Species Report sections if records are submitted as early in 1980 as possible, so that, hopefully, the Report can be published earlier than in previous years.
2. Would ornithologists undertaking ornithological studies in East Africa, please send brief details to D.A. Turner, Box 48019, Nairobi, so that the section covering bird work in East Africa is as complete as possible.